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Blair Hall Featured as Charleston Landmark Series Ornament of Hope

Sep-13-2006

Released by the Charleston Area Chamber of Commerce

Easter Seals of Central Illinois and the Charleston Area Chamber of Commerce announce the release of the eighth annual Charleston Landmark Series Ornament of Hope. The new ornament, which commemorates Blair Hall on the campus of Eastern Illinois University, has been proclaimed by the Chamber of Commerce and Mayor John Inyart as the official ornament of the city.

In 1911, the Illinois Legislature appropriated \$75,000 for a Model School to be built on the grounds of Eastern Illinois State Normal School. Construction was completed in 1913, and the building served as a teacher training facility for grades one through 12 for many years. In 1958, it was formally named "Blair Hall" to honor Francis G. Blair, Eastern's first supervisor of teacher training. At that time, it was announced that the building would house the education and social science departments and their classrooms.

On the afternoon of April 28, 2004, Blair Hall caught on fire and sustained significant fire and water damage to the structure. After an extensive renovation project, the building re-opened for classes on April 17, 2006, and was formally re-dedicated on April 24, 2006. Today the building is home to various university offices and departments, including African-American Studies, the Graduate School, the Office of Grants and Research, International Programs, the Minority Affairs Office, School of Continuing Education, Department of Sociology/Anthropology and the Office of Study Abroad.

Ornaments will be available for purchase at the following locations – Towne Square Jewelers (634 W. Lincoln Ave.), Weber's Jewelry and Gifts (508 Sixth St.) and the Charleston Area Chamber of Commerce (501 Jackson Ave.), all in Charleston; the Picket Fence (901 Broadway Ave.) in Mattoon; and the Easter Seals office (2715 N. 27th St.) in Decatur. The ornaments are 24K-gold-plated, and come packaged in royal blue velvet cases, ready for mailing. They sell for \$15 each.



Previous ornaments in the series are: The Five Mile House (2004), 150th Anniversary of the Coles County Fair (2003); Charleston Carnegie Public Library (2002); Eastern Illinois University's Old Main (2001); Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center (2000); Lincoln Log Cabin (1999); and the Coles County Courthouse (1998). All ornaments, except Old Main, are available to purchase at the Charleston Area Chamber of Commerce.

Proceeds from the sale of ornaments support Easter Seals programs and services for children and adults with disabilities in Coles County. Programs and services include family assistance programs, advocacy awareness and helping disabled agriculture workers through the AgrAbility programs.

For information, contact the Charleston Area Chamber of Commerce at 217-345-7041 or Easter Seals Central Illinois at 217-429-1052, ext. 110.



Shown with the 2006 Charleston Landmark Series Ornament of Hope, featuring EIU's Blair Hall, are (from left) Lou Hencken, president of EIU; Cindy Titus, executive director, Charleston Area Chamber of Commerce; Teri Moore, director, development and marketing, Easter Seals Central Illinois; and Charleston Mayor John Inyart.